

Message Text

SECRET

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
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AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
USINT BAGHDAD POUCH

S E C R E T KUWAIT 3936

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, XF, US, KU
SUBJECT: BRIEFING ON MID-EAST PEACE

REF: STATE 172477

1. IN MEETING JULY 9 WITH KHALED BABTAIN AND IBRAHIM AL-MOOSA, SENIOR OFFICIALS OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS DEPT OF MFA, I DREW ON REFTTEL DESCRIBING LATEST USG EFFORTS TO PROMOTE ARAB/ISRAELI PEACE SETTLEMENT. I STRESSED THAT, IN THE WAKE OF ISRAEL'S DISAPPOINTING RESPONSE CONCERNING THE WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP, PRESIDENT CARTER HAD TAKEN THE INITIATIVE OF INVITING FON MINS KAMEL AND DAYAN TO MEET IN LONDON WITH SECRETARY VANCE PRESENT. I STATED THAT I REALIZED MANY KUWAITIS ARE PRESENTLY OPPOSED TO DIRECT ARAB/ISRAELI TALKS BUT THAT THE USG CONTINUES TO BELIEVE DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL

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TO PROGRESS. I SAID THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S PRESENT INITIATIVE SHOWS THE CONTINUING, UNDIMINISHED US GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT TO HELPING THE PARTIES FIND A FRAMEWORK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT.

2. I SAID THAT WE BELIEVE THAT THE PEACE PROCESS IS NOT ONLY WHAT THE PARTIES MAY PUT ON PAPER AT ANY GIVEN TIME,

SUCH AS THE CURRENT EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI STATEMENTS, BUT ALSO INTERNAL POLITICAL DEBATE WHICH CAN TAKE A LONG TIME BUT WHICH IS THE ONLY MEANS OF NATIONAL MOVEMENT TOWARD GENUINELY CHANGED POSITIONS. I SAID THAT CONTINUATION OF THAT INTERNAL POLITICAL DEBATE MAY BE BEST STIMULATED BY FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSIONS IN WHICH THE PARTICIPANTS BOTH FEEL HEAVY PRESSURE NOT TO APPEAR THE PARTY WHICH IS UNWILLING TO NEGOTIATE IN EARNEST.

3. BABBAIN RESPONDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF KUWAIT HAS NO DOUBT ABOUT THE SINCERITY OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S COMMITMENT TO THE PEACE PROCESS. HOWEVER, BABBAIN--AND MANY OTHERS--CANNOT BELIEVE THAT THE US GOVERNMENT HAS THE COLLECTIVE WILL TO PURSUE THAT COMMITMENT SUCCESSFULLY. THE ZIONIST LOBBY, HE SAID WILL SURELY BLOCK PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS.

4. I REMINDED BABBAIN, AND HE ACKNOWLEDGED, THAT THERE HAD BEEN A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN AMERICAN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION SINCE PRESIDENT SADAT'S DRAMATIC VISIT TO JERUSALEM, AND THAT THE SENATE VOTE ON THE PRESIDENT'S AIRCRAFT PACKAGE DEAL WAS STRONG EVIDENCE OF THE FACT THAT THE US GOVERNMENT HAS MORE ROOM TO MANEUVER ON MID-EAST ISSUES THAN IT USED TO HAVE. I SAID THAT NO ONE IMAGINED NEGOTIATIONS FOR PEACE WOULD BE QUICK AND EASY AND THAT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS HAD ALREADY BEEN ACHIEVED. AVOIDING LETTING PESSIMISM GOVERN POLICY IS CRUCIAL, I SAID, AND IT IS MOST IMPORTANT
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THAT THE ARAB MODERATES CONTINUE TO SHOW PATIENCE. THEY SHOULD BE SUPPORTIVE OF AMERICAN AND EGYPTIAN EFFORTS, RATHER THAN SIMPLY PREDICTING THE WORST, STARTING TO CUT LOSSES, AND THEREBY UNDERMINING THE BEST HOPE FOR THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WHICH WE ALL AGREE IS DESPERATELY NEEDED.

5. BABBAIN SAID THAT PATIENCE IS ALL VERY WELL BUT THAT, WHILE THE SLOW PROCESS I HAD DESCRIBED WAS GOING FORWARD, "THE OTHER SIDE" WAS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION AND MAKING GREAT STRIDES FORWARD. HE WAS REFERRING BOTH TO CONTINUING ISRAELI SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY AND TO SOVIET HAYMAKING IN THE AREA AT AMERICAN EXPENSE. CONTINUING IDENTIFICATION (IN ARAB EYES) OF AMERICA WITH AN INTRANSIGENT ISRAEL PLAYS INTO SOVIET HANDS, BABBAIN SAID. USG SHOULD BE MOVING FASTER TO BRING ISRAEL AROUND, HE IMPLIED, LEST IT LOSE THE GREAT POWER CONTEST FOR THE MIDDLE EAST WHILE VAINLY PURSUING AN ARAB/ISRAELI PEACE.
SUTHERLAND

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